

Good Evening Members of the Appropriation Committee,

My name is Amy McCoy, I have lived in Glastonbury for 8 years with my family. My husband and I have two children. Our son, Matthew is 10 years old, has an intellectual disability and is part of the DDS system. I am testifying against the Governor's proposed budget cuts to DDS.

Matthew will graduate from our public high school when he turns 21 in 10 years. What will he and students like him do after age 21 when their school system program ends? Matthew's dream is to work –he wants to be a garbage man. He loves to work and to be busy. He has even established his own business on our street, dragging out our neighbors' full cans to the street, and pulling back the empty cans to their driveways. This is done with lots of support (an adult always with him for safety) and we love to watch him as his skills grow. He once saw a neighbor down the road who he didn't know as he was pulling out a friend's garbage. He said "mommy I'm getting a new customer today", he ran across the street, introduced himself and said, "do you want to be my new customer?" Yes, he has business skills, how could they say no to him? But he needs support to work and to be productive. Doesn't he deserve a chance at a future? If the grad funding remains intact and the programs run as they currently do, Matthew will have an opportunity to work as an adult. His grad program will provide him with a supported work program, he will continue to build his skills, and make his own contribution to the world.

If the grad funding is cut as the Governor has proposed, once Matthew turns 21, my husband or I will either have to stop working to care for Matthew, or pay someone to babysit for our adult son. Matthew will not have an opportunity to work, his skills will decrease, and he won't have a peer group – instead he will be stuck at home possibly still pulling out our neighbors' garbage cans once a week. That is not a life for an adult with an intellectual disability. Matthew is capable of so much more than that. He needs and deserves a chance at a future where he can work and contribute to society. He does not deserve to sit at home with no grad program because of funding cuts to DDS.

As a society, I thought we were having success moving in the direction of including people of all abilities and disabilities in the same communities to live and work. By removing funding, people like Matthew will be forced to sit at home – with no opportunities to work or succeed in their communities. This is a step backwards.

I want to work when I grow up. I want to be a garbage man. And I need your help!

